

Cabarrus County Convention & Visitors Bureau

Strategic Plan 2021

This strategic plan builds on the prior plan from 2011, which has been updated annually. It is research-based including input from 78 community, civic and travel industry leaders who participated in the DestinationNEXT Planning Model.

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Draft 1 V.1

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Destination, Mission and Vision

Cabarrus County, North Carolina—“Where Racing Lives!”

Positioned in the rolling countryside of the Carolina Piedmont, Cabarrus County is located in south-central North Carolina just 20 minutes northeast of Charlotte, North Carolina. The region is home to more than 1.8 million people and includes the cities of Concord and Kannapolis as well as the towns of Harrisburg, Midland and Mount Pleasant.

Known as the heart of NASCAR country, Cabarrus County is home to an exciting motorsports heritage. Not only was the first official race held here 53 years ago at legendary Charlotte Motor Speedway, but our area has the greatest concentration of NASCAR team headquarters.

As a popular year-round destination for leisure travel, Cabarrus County’s high octane excitement of racing-themed attractions, shopping, restaurants and history also attracts a variety of sports and business-related travelers. Our region is steeped in speed and embraces the innovative while preserving tradition.

Tourism is big business in Cabarrus County and requires a smart strategy for this economic development effort. In 2016, tourism generated \$433.03 million in visitor spending in Cabarrus County, ranking 12th in travel impact among North Carolina’s 100 counties. More than 4,500 jobs were directly attributed to travel and tourism, and state and local tax revenues amounted to \$32.5 million representing a \$484 tax savings per household for Cabarrus County residents.

The Cabarrus County Convention and Visitors Bureau (CCCVB) is tasked with promoting Cabarrus County as a destination. The CCCVB is one of 212 fully accredited destination marketing and management organizations with Destinations International.

The Mission and Vision of the CCVB are:

MISSION: Drive visitation to Cabarrus County to generate the maximum impact through hotel stays and visitor spending for the economic benefit of all residents.

VISION: To continually grow and sustain a dynamic travel industry to become the number one economic force in Cabarrus County.



Overall Direction

Cabarrus County Convention and Visitors Bureau (CCCVB) operating as Visit Cabarrus is a destination marketing and management organization solely focused on the progressive growth of the travel industry in Cabarrus County. A thriving travel industry improves the local economy for the benefit of all citizens.

The Cabarrus County CVB is committed to promoting and building awareness of Cabarrus County as a leisure and group destination with the highest caliber staff in the industry providing leadership and innovation to drive:

- Increased overnight and day-trip visitation
- Increased spending per travel party
- Longer average length of stay
- Increased visitor satisfaction

The Cabarrus County CVB is committed to creating a total visitor entertainment destination by providing leadership and innovation from the Board of Directors and staff focused on improved and expanded overall visitor experience with new activities:

- An entertainment hub with new and improved lodging, dining, meeting/event space, shopping and attractions that complement current attractors such as the Speedway and racing experiences, Great Wolf Lodge, Concord Mills Mall, SeaLife Aquarium, NC Music Hall of Fame, Reed Gold Mine and the downtowns of Concord and Kannapolis.
- Mobility & Air Access – Master Planning to include:
 - Connectivity between three traveler activity hubs (Exit 49, Concord and Kannapolis)
 - Improved road and pedestrian infrastructure including a recreational trail system
 - Enhance and expand Concord USA air connectivity and mobility to and from the airport
 - Provide affordable transportation for hospitality industry workers
- Workforce – fostering a highly skilled hospitality workforce to support travel industry businesses
 - Support local workforce & jobs entities in the recruitment/training of new hospitality ready workers
 - Partner with secondary, vocational and higher education institutions to produce a highly skilled workforce
- Advocacy for travel industry issues and partnership with other economic development entities
 - Identify and address issues affecting the travel industry
 - Maintain an updated crisis communications plan



Destination Vision & Board Structure

Strategic Vision for Cabarrus County as a Destination

- Maintain high visitor occupancy while not exceeding the destination's carrying capacity.
- Enhance I-85 gateway exits to move traffic efficiently, welcome visitors, create a sense of place based on the brand and direct first-time visitors to the Exit 49 Visitor Center.
- Expanded and new visitor attractions and group event venues to create additional demand.
 - New sports and event venues designed to drive increased destination appeal in the shoulder and off-seasons while discouraging increased road traffic in peak visitation periods.
 - Development of additional attractions, expanded or new meeting/event facilities, team sports facilities and other tourism amenities.
- Continue infrastructure improvements to move traffic efficiently; provide safe mobility for pedestrians; encourage walking, cycling; reduce vehicular traffic; improved curb appeal for a more attractive destination. The installation of curbing, wide sidewalks, turning lanes, bike lanes, lighting, pedestrian bridges and signage.
- A well-trained and abundant hospitality industry workforce with maximum year-round full-time jobs.

CCCVB STRUCTURE



Board Focus

The CCCVB Board of Directors will be engaged in two primary functions:

- 1) **Providing proper oversight** related to the function and ROI of the staff's research-based marketing of the destination.
- 2) **Fulfill the vision for Cabarrus County in 2021** in partnership with City Officials and other economic development groups. CCCVB will foster, facilitate and encourage the growth and development of the destination.



Strategic Initiatives

1. **Market Cabarrus County as a destination with the highest skilled and most dynamic sales and marketing team.** Visit Cabarrus (CCCVB) will meet the highest standards of accreditation and performance (research driven ROI) with measurable results as a research-based DMO (destination marketing and management organization).
 - a) CCCVB is a research-based marketing organization meeting the highest standards of DMO operations. Maintain accreditation with Destinations International. Meet the highest standards of financial and ethical accountability.
 - b) Update research and marketing strategy continually as part of an annual plan that is supported by the local travel industry.
 - c) Deliver on the brand, “Where Racing Lives” and expand the brand as an entertainment destination to appeal to new and varied audiences. Broaden reach into new geographic territories and increase demand for inbound air travel to Cabarrus County.
 - d) Support the staff in achieving the highest standards of excellence and performance through on-going education, certifications, measurement and accountability. Maintain competitive wages/benefits and foster a creative and supportive work environment where the team thrives and continues to produce award winning sales and marketing programs.
 - e) Partner with Charlotte region, North Carolina and southeast travel industry partners to leverage the brand and reach a wider audience.
 - f) Provide leadership to the Cabarrus County travel industry through training, co-op sales/marketing programs, and workforce development.
 - g) Provide dynamic visitor information services for individual, group and event visitors to drive increased spending in-market.
 - h) Tracking and accountability to demonstrate highest possible Return-on-Investment (ROI) – Lodging market segmentation research of key performance metrics (KPIs) and lodging revenue tracking/analysis.

Measurable Success:

*Unqualified annual audits	*Destinations International Accreditation	*Annual Plan with trackable ROI	*Awards & Certifications
*Group sales growth	*Increased participation in partner programs	*Growth in lodging room demand & ADR	*Staff Retention
*Increased visitor satisfaction	*Increased visitor center attendance	*Longer length of stay	*Increased Spending
	*Increased inbound air travel		



Strategic Initiatives

2. **An entertainment hub with continually updated and improved lodging, dining, meeting/event space, team sports facilities, shopping and attractions.** Visit Cabarrus (CCCVB) will conduct on-going research to identify visitor satisfaction with current travel industry assets and the need for any improvements or expansion of facilities and experiences. Visit Cabarrus will also monitor destination trends to insure that Cabarrus County remains competitive as a destination within a larger metro area.
- a) Lodging – the two primary clusters of lodging are at I-85 exits 49 and 58/60.
 - b) Dining – research has revealed the need for more upscale, chop-house style dining.
 - c) Meeting/event space – Cabarrus County has excellent facilities for conferences and meetings that operate at near capacity most months of the year. Additional meeting space attached to lodging would facilitate increased demand.
 - d) Team sports/competition facilities – build on the success of current sports facilities and add new facilities to drive demand during the weeks with the lowest hotel occupancy.
 - e) Shopping – Cabarrus County is home to one of the largest malls within the multi-state region. The addition of local boutique/style unique shopping in the downtown areas of Kannapolis and Concord will increase the appeal of these communities.
 - f) Attractions – increase activities and attractors in Kannapolis, Concord and Harrisburg to distribute visitors throughout the County.
 - g) Expanded Wi-Fi broadband access – focus on the busiest areas where the majority of travelers congregate and work to expand broadband Wi-Fi access which will drive increased traveler satisfaction with the visit.

Measurable Success:

*Downtown lodging in Kannapolis & Concord
*Sports facilities to drive slow demand periods

*New upscale dining
*New/expanded retail in the downtown areas

*Expanded/New Meeting Space
*Expanded broadband Wi-Fi access



Strategic Initiatives

- 3. Mobility and air access are critical to the future of Cabarrus County as a destination** – CCCVB will work with local and state governments and economic development entities to improve and ease the mobility of visitors and residents alike within Cabarrus County. Traffic congestion is an issue that can be improved starting with a master planning process focused on the most congested areas. All plans should have a long-range vision to identify future challenges. CCCVB will also work on the expansion and facilitation of air access at ConcordUSA. Increased airlift and improved facilities will expand demand for Concord as a gateway city to the greater region.
- a) Master Planning – partner with local governments and other economic development entities to develop a transportation master plan that addresses the effective mobility of visitors and residents throughout the County. Smooth flowing traffic is the goal.
 - b) Gateways from I-85 that deliver on the brand, welcome and direct travelers to information, activities, lodging, etc. Explore building brand recognition of “Exit 49”,
 - c) Connectivity between the three traveler activity hubs (Exit 49, Concord & Kannapolis) – the master plan should address the connectivity of the three major visitor hubs within the County and plan for future growth in Mount Pleasant and Harrisburg.
 - d) Improved road infrastructure to move visitors and residents efficiently – focus on congested roadways with additional lanes and alternate routes to move traffic efficiently.
 - e) Improved pedestrian and bicycle paths and trails – additional pedestrian and bicycle paths/trails will make it easier for visitors to migrate from hotels to dining, shopping and activities without using a vehicle. Access to rental bikes, golf carts, etc. will increase use of non-motorized transportation.
 - f) Enhance and expand ConcordUSA air connectivity – partner with airport and local government officials as well as economic development leaders to expand and improve airport facilities and expand the number of flights and destinations served.
 - g) Encourage affordable transportation for Cabarrus County hospitality industry workers

Measurable Success:

- *Master Plan for Mobility throughout the County
- *Minimal traffic congestion on Bruton Smith Boulevard
- *Increased flights & destinations & expanded airport facilities

- *Flyover road access into Concord Mills Mall
- *Secondary roads and pedestrian bridges connecting Mall to GWL
- *Branded I-85 gateways



Strategic Initiatives

4. **The development of a qualified and abundant workforce for hospitality industry businesses is critical to future success and growth** – CCCVB will coalesce the travel industry businesses with schools, governments and workforce organizations on a long-term plan to inspire younger generations to seek out careers in hospitality, to provide training/education for those entering the workforce and to address competitive pay and benefits to retain a qualified workforce.
- a) Develop a system to conduct regular surveys with travel industry businesses to identify the number of open full-time and part-time positions. Develop a job vacancy/employment rate monitoring tool and work to have every job filled as this provides the maximum revenue generation from visitors who receive the best service.
 - b) Partner with secondary and vocational schools – programs should be offered to 1) generate interest in hospitality industry careers and 2) provide training and skills for careers in hospitality.
 - c) Partner with Cabarrus County Department of Human Services to identify potential hospitality workers, provide training, conduct job fairs, provide transportation, etc. to move people into full-time employment.
 - d) Partner with NC Works Career Center to identify potential hospitality workers, provide training, conduct job fairs, provide transportation, etc. to move people into full-time employment.
 - e) Monitor the residence location of hospitality industry workforce to determine the availability of affordable housing within Cabarrus County. The cost of housing and transportation to work are two of the most significant issues behind lack of workforce to fill vacant positions at local hospitality industry businesses.

Measurable Success:

*Increased applicants for hospitality jobs

*Part-time jobs converted to full time jobs

*Less turnover

*Higher visitor satisfaction ratings with service

Strategic Initiatives

5. **Advocacy for travel industry issues and communication within the travel industry and the County is critical to the sustainability of travel industry growth** – CCCVB will regularly convene travel industry businesses and conduct research to identify issues affecting the Cabarrus County travel industry. Partnership with other economic development entities and DMOs in the state and region will leverage the industry’s voice when reaching out to state and federal officials. Further, CCCVB will conduct annual updates and training of the crisis communications plan that addresses a wide range of potential incidents that could negatively affect the long-term success of the destination.
- a) Create a policy/action committee of travel industry leaders and conduct regular listening sessions and surveys with travel industry leaders to identify issues that affect their growth and success. Possible issues of concern are workforce/wages, taxation, disruptors, crime, regulations, traffic congestion, signage, etc.
 - b) Maintain a series of white papers/position statements addressing the issues identified by the travel industry.
 - c) Retain lobbyist as necessary to address issues at the state or federal level.
 - d) Conduct bi-annual travel industry updates to elected bodies, economic development and civic organizations. Communicate the impact of the travel industry to those not in the travel industry.
 - e) Maintain an annually updated crisis communications plan. Conduct training sessions with travel industry business owners & managers reviewing procedures and communications hierarchy in the event of a crisis.
 - f) Maintain reserve funds equal to three months operating budget to cover crisis-related expenditures.

Measurable Success:

- *Policy/Action Committee meets quarterly
- *Priority list of policy initiatives

- *Crisis plan posted at all travel industry businesses
- *Biannual presentations to elected bodies